

THE TATTLER



JOURNAL OF THE HISTORY GUILD OF DALY CITY COLMA

GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK

Welcome back from the summer recess. We hope one and all had a great summer and that all are ready for another fun- and history-filled season of local lore. There are definitely some great programs coming your way, starting with our September venue. I want to alert all Guilders to some exciting news on the home front.

Firstly, as you're reading this, the museum facade has been painted and looks brand-spanking new. If you've been by the place of late, then you'll know just how badly the 'old girl' needed a facelift. We hired professions to paint the façade, which finishes off painting of the entire museum inside and out. The inside and back of the building were painted three years ago by volunteers. Please stop by to see the new colors, which are similar to the old but with just a bit more of a 'sparkle' with additional trim colors.

Secondly, the board is incredibly pleased to share that the Daly City Centennial Documentary is completed, or as they say in film--"it's a wrap!" The official title is *Daly City: Growing Up in America*, and is a collaboration of the Guild, which commissioned the film, and KM2 Communications/Kingston Media. There will be an official premiere in either October or November, so definitely stay tuned. [Of course, we'll keep you updated by postal mail, but for those of you on Facebook, you can keep track of any new developments, and please continue to 'Like' us. Key words: DalyCityHistoryMuseum.com.] We hope that you all will be able to join us, enjoy learning facts and factoids both old and new about the Daly City Community, and be so enamored that you'll want to take a copy of the DVD home after the screening. Yes, we'll have copies available for sale, and of course all proceeds will benefit the museum.



Russ Brabec serving drinks at luncheon.

I want to thank all of you who came to the Spring Luncheon on May 6th at the Doelger Café for the debut of our *History Guild Cook Book*. And I most especially want to thank the project organizers Marie Brizuela, Marilyn Olcese, and Marian Mann. Thanks also go to volunteers who helped make this event a success. Photos of this tasty

HISTORY EVENING

VISITACION VALLEY HISTORY PROJECT



Wednesday, Sept. 19th - 7 P.M.

FREE – EVERYONE WELCOME!

**101 Lake Merced Blvd., Daly City
Doelger Center Café**

There are many history groups in the nearby area and one of the most interesting groups is the **Visitacion Valley History Project** whose representatives will be telling us about their organization and their local history at our September meeting. This group's area is adjacent to the Bayshore District of Daly City and members of their group have come to the Daly City Museum for research. Among the many things they do is to conduct oral interviews concerning the history of their area, archive historical documents relevant to that area in southeastern San Francisco and their organization has published an Arcadia History book on Visitacion Valley. One of their primary goals is to secure a permanent museum for their community.

SEPTEMBER REFRESHMENTS

Vaughn and Gloriann Jones, Annette Hipona, Max and Elsa Ramos, and Marie Brizuela will be providing refreshments at our May meeting. **Elinor Charleston** is our gracious Hospitality Chair.



May Luncheon buffet line.

affair follow in this edition. Cookbooks are offered for continued sale at the museum and member meetings. Thanks are also due to Gloriann and Vaughn Jones who led a second hike to see the tunnel at Mussel Rock in June.

On a sad note, we have lost several good friends of history. Bernie Winn, a loyal and true friend of the Guild, Daly City native, and local author, died on June 21 in San Francisco. He would have been 92 this month. Please see Bunny Gillespie's remembrance of 'Bern' in this *Tattler*. The last edition of the *Tattler* featured a picture of Bernie and Audrey in front of our new fireplace when they attended our "hearth warming" at the museum.



Samuel Chandler in the crowd at the City Hall Centennial event.
Photo Courtesy of the City of Daly City.

Just a month later, Sam Chandler passed on July 29; he was 93. Sam served as Daly City's second 'City Librarian' from 1958-1983. He compiled a collection of historical books at the Serramonte Library--the 'Chandler Collection'--

and vintage photographs that became the basis for the Guild's compilation. While Sam presided over the operation of four libraries, building Westlake and Serramonte, and renovating Bayshore, he also was quite the historian himself. He served as the chairman of the now defunct Daly City History, Arts, and Science Commission and secretary of the San Mateo County Historical Association. In 1973, at the city council's direction and utilizing the photos he had amassed, Sam wrote the official history of the city in his brilliant book *Gateway to the Peninsula*. The late Congressman Tom Lantos awarded him the Congressional Public Service Award in 1984 in part for having researched, collected, and preserved historical documents, photographs, and creating both a written and oral history of the area. In later years he and wife Ruth would attend Guild events when able, including the dedication of the museum in 2009. In March of 2011 he celebrated Daly City's Centennial at a reception at City Hall.

Lanty Molloy Sr. on June 11th at age 79. Lanty took over the family tavern, Historic Old Malloy's in Colma, from his father Frank who bought it in 1927. Built in 1883 as the Brooks and Carey Saloon, it was then known as the Brooksville Hotel until the historic roadhouse was bought by the Malloy family. Lanty Molloy was famous for his hospitality and interest in history, particularly the early days of boxing in old time Colma. His collection of historical items decorates the walls of the tavern. Youngest son Owen took over operation when his father retired in the year 2000. Located across from Holy Cross Cemetery, Malloy's has a long tradition as a meeting place for final toasts after nearby funerals – fittingly, the wake for Lanty Malloy was held at Historic Old Malloy's tavern.

We just found out as this *Tattler* is going to press that David Hatfield, husband of Pat Hatfield, died on August 15th. Pat is President of the Colma Historical Association and she and David both helped establish that organization. We remember these gentlemen with respect and affection, and thank them for their contributions to the history of the community; they will be missed indeed. The Guild further extends condolences to Audrey Winn, Ruth Chandler, Blaid Malloy, Pat Hatfield, and their families.

OTHER HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Colma Historical Association

1500 Hillside Blvd., Colma, 650-757-1676.

Saturday, September 22nd Annual Dinner to be held at the Colma Community Center, 1520 Hillside Blvd., Colma. Call for details and reservations.

Tuesday, October 30th Quarterly Meeting at 6:30 pm.

Cypress Lawn Heritage Foundation

WALKING TOURS: Tours start at the Noble Chapel located in the East Gardens of Cypress Lawn left past Cypress Lawn's gate at 1:30 pm. Info.: 650-550-8810

Aug. 25 *Heritage Walk*

Sept. 15 *Streets of San Francisco at Cypress Lawn*

Oct. 13 *Gargoyles, Foo Dogs and More*

Oct. 27 *Only in October Tomb Walk* (Svanevik)

LECTURES: Meet at Cypress Lawn's Reception Center, 2nd Floor, Administration Building, 1370 El Camino Real, Colma. 1:30 pm. Free, refreshments. Lecture Information: 650.550-8811

Sept. 16 Michael Svanevik *Timber Kings*

Oct. 21 Douglas Keister *Stories in Stone: New York*



The History Guild of Daly City/Colma is a
501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization

Memberships are \$25 per year.

JOHN W. MARCHBANK: OPPORTUNIST, BUSINESSMAN, BENEFACTOR



By Marcus Gonzalez

Mention the name John Marchbank to most Daly City residents today, and they might say, "Marchbank ... isn't there a park named after him?" Today, it's easy for us to underestimate the importance of a person like John Marchbank in the history of Daly City.

Marchbank was part businessman, part political boss, part publisher, part turf man, part philanthropist. He was the person you came to if you wanted a job, a loan, good press, or a political office. If you had his support, you had a strong ally. If you got on his bad side, you had a powerful opponent.

John William Marchbank was born on Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, Canada, in 1868. His grandfather had emigrated from Scotland in 1825. Though it was claimed he had spurned the title of baron, it's far more likely that he descended from farmers of the Scottish lowlands.



First Stores in Dawson 1898. Marchbanks Great Northern Hotel is the tall building. *Dawson Historical Society.*

Klondike Fortune

Along with many others, he headed to the wilds of the Klondike Gold Rush in Canada's Yukon Territory. He left a leg behind in a mining accident. At a time when "handicapped accessible" was far in the future, Marchbank was not deterred. He soon learned a lesson that Sam Brannan and Levi Strauss had learned during California's Gold Rush. There was more profit in supplying miners than doing the actual mining. He opened a saloon and gambling house in Dawson called "The Northern." He also bought interests in hotels and other businesses. By the time the Klondike rush was over, and the bulk of miners had moved on to Alaska,

John Marchbank was a wealthy young man. With his fortune established, he headed south to new opportunities.

The Gambler Arrives

The timing of Marchbank's arrival in the Daly City area, around 1906, could not have been better. Daly City had not even been incorporated yet. The Daly's Hill area was growing rapidly following the 1906 earthquake and fire. By 1907, John Daly had subdivided his dairy farm, and many new families and businesses joined the previous farmers, merchants, and quarry men.

Key to Marchbank's interests, gambling was wide open and booming. He must have liked what he saw. Banned in San Francisco, gambling was ever-expanding on the peninsula. The Daly City area, with its street car line and proximity to San Francisco, was well situated to receive and entertain the eager gamblers. As Samuel Chandler noted, "There were gaming tables with cards and dice in nearly every bar on Mission Street. Even grocery and dry goods stores featured spots where games of every variety could be found."

Boxing was in a golden age, with many bouts fought here and in Colma. If dog racing was your preference, there was a well-built track called the Union Coursing Park where Jefferson High School now stands. Boxing and dog racing both attracted gamblers like magnets. Even after Daly City's 1911 incorporation, gambling continued unhindered for several decades.

When it was time for the gamblers to come inside, Marchbank was ready. His base was the triangular block bound by Mission, Flournoy, and San Jose streets. Here, he published a newspaper – the *Daly City Record*, established his personal residence, and built a new casino, "The Northern," named after his first casino in the Yukon. With The Northern established, Marchbank built another, more upscale casino at School Street and Junipero Serra Boulevard called the Villa Mateo, famed for its fireplace made of champagne bottles. A few convenient steps toward Top of the Hill, he helped develop the Daly City Bank.

Saloons and gambling parlors were far more than places to drink or gamble. They were really the public houses of the area. You could catch up on the latest news, get a meal, make employment connections, enjoy live entertainment, or collect your mail if you didn't have a permanent address. Marchbank knew that the best operating policy was to keep the locals happy. Though Daly City residents could work in his establishments, they were otherwise kept out. Today's loser at the black

jack table could be tomorrow's anti-gambling crusader. This was less of an issue in the remote, mostly male towns of the Klondike. Daly City was a community of families, and it would have been much easier for anti-gambling sentiment to take hold here.

Marchbank was able to "control the message" through the *Daly City Record*. It provided him with a pulpit to editorialize on local issues, extol the virtues of America, publicize his businesses and those of his friends, and support the political candidates of his choosing. His endeavors were not confined to the United States. He established a 30,000 acre rubber plantation on the Amazon River of Brazil and developed a gold mine in Honduras.

Political Boss

Marchbank never ran for political office himself, preferring to support and influence other men who did. His relationships with politicians were well understood by all parties: if Marchbank supported their campaigns, they would not interfere with his businesses after they took office.

He was a political boss of both the city and the county. It was asserted that he had stakes in gambling houses and taverns (speakeasies during Prohibition) up and down the peninsula. He also invested in other businesses through silent partnerships, ensuring that local business interests stayed allied to him.

Marchbank possessed a forceful presence. His steely blue eyes held a piercing gaze. At his compound on San Jose Avenue, he was known to twirl a .45 pistol in front of his subordinates, though there is no record that he ever used it! He had a few good friends, notably Daly and Dr. Charles Jones, but most friendships were ones of transient usefulness. As Daly City old-timer Art Bodien remembered, "He was a wonderful man, but also a very peculiar fella. He didn't keep friends long. Fire chief, inspector, it didn't matter. He had 'em for a while, then bing, bang, they were out."

Marchbank's political influence began to wane in the mid-30s when his picked man for sheriff, John Harper, lost to his former friend, James J. McGrath. Soon after, his candidate for county supervisor lost to local lumberman H.H. White. In 1935, Sheriff McGrath and two deputies raided the Villa Mateo casino. Slowly, the boss began to lose his grip on local politics.

The Philanthropist

Marchbank's generosity was legendary. He is rightly regarded as one of Daly City's greatest benefactors.

Along with John Daly, he brought the growing area something it desperately needed, a large infusion of cash and the willingness to spread it around. He and Daly had a friendship forged out of the respect that two self-made people will have for each other. In 1920, they jointly financed the construction of Daly City's first public library at the Top of the Hill. Marchbank also gave freely to local churches. At his Daly City Theatre, opened in 1928, he gave away ice cream and popcorn during holiday parties. He was also fondly known for tossing coins to children or inviting them to reach into fishbowls of quarters on the porch of his home at 3317 San Jose Avenue. From the outside, the house looks remarkably the same today.

During the Great Depression, he helped out needy families with food and clothing. He was the quiet helper of many. Sometimes, food baskets would mysteriously arrive from "The White Angel." Many people recalled how he had saved their homes or businesses by providing loans – after being refused by their banks.

In 1936, he donated Vista Grande Park, once part of the Knowles Ranch, to the city. Together with funds and expertise from the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA), a beautiful city park was created. It was renamed Marchbank Park in 1941, certainly his greatest legacy.

The Turf Man at Tanforan

Since his youth in Canada, Marchbank loved horses. In 1920, he purchased the Tanforan Race Track in San Bruno. He received statewide acclaim as the man who brought horse track racing and betting back to California. He thus held the distinction of being the only person in the country to wholly own and operate a horse racing track. At Tanforan, he watched races from his penthouse atop the clubhouse. When Marchbank had a falling out with former friend and associate, Bill Kyne, Kyne retaliated by opening the Bay Meadows track in San Mateo. For the next few years, the men went head to head competing for racing dates.

After selling Tanforan in 1945, Marchbank moved for good to the warm meadows of his Walnut Creek Heather Farms breeding ranch. After retiring to Heather Farms, Marchbank died of a heart attack on December 1, 1947, at the age of 79. He left most of his estate to his second wife, Bernadette Jones, whom he had married a few months before his death. He also left large sums to several churches and charities.

Besides Heather Farms, he held extensive real estate in Daly City and a house in Pebble Beach at the time of his death. Perhaps not surprisingly, he chose Holy Cross

Cemetery in Colma as his final resting place, not far from the city he did so much to shape.

Marchbank came down from the Klondike at a perfect time for his enterprises, and he was rewarded for his efforts. Along the way, whatever his motives, he helped make Daly City a better place in which to live.

MUSEUM DONATIONS & VOLUNTEERS

Thanks to: Sylvia Raquel of South City who donated a framed original of the 1940's *Daly City Shopping News* in memory of Emila Salvo; Mark Weinberger donated a bowling pin and sign from Serra Bowl; Marian Mann donated child's bowling shoes and posters from Serra Bowl; Marie Brizuela donated a copy of *Home & Design Magazine* featuring an article on Doelger Homes and a Mission Merchant's cap; Michael Rocchetta, Rich Rochetta, and Mark Weinberger for handling the repair of our vintage clock which had to be sent to a special clock repair specialist in southern California; Marilyn Olcese for managing the painting of the façade of the museum; and Mark Fontana for modifications and re-installation of granite signs on the front of the museum after completion of painting; and Bryan Kingston of KM2/Kingston Media for donating an external computer hard drive with images scanned for the documentary.



Bernard Winn during an interview for the documentary.
Photography by Bryan Kingston.

REMEMBERING BERNARD C. WINN

BY
BUNNY GILLESPIE

It was indeed sad to read of the passing of History Guild contributor and friend Bernard Winn at the end of June. Our condolences go out to his widow, Audrey, and his family.

Ken and I met the Winns over twenty years ago when we staffed the Guild's mini-museum. Bernie and Audrey initially visited the mini-museum in the mid-'90s. Bernie was then preparing the manuscript for his *"From the Top of the Hill"* book about growing up in Daly City during the 1920s and 1930s. Bernie had already published six previous books. We were impressed immediately with his accomplishments and gentle demeanor. Bernie searched the Guild's archival, albeit infant, collection of vintage photographs, paper ephemera, memorabilia, trinkets, and treasures for his work in progress. His completed book graciously gives credit to "valuable assistance of volunteers at the History Guild of DC/Colma and Colma Historical Assn." In those halcyon days of the Guild, the Winns became faithful attendees at membership meetings. They often

visited the Guild's informational booth at the Gateway Festival and Victorian Days in Central Park. In retrospect, Bernie and Audrey seem to epitomize those peaceful and calm days of yore. The San Francisco Chronicle's revered columnist, Carl Nolte, wrote of Bernie, "Winn is a slight man with a soft voice and an insatiable curiosity about things in general." "I'm interested in oddball things," Winn had told Nolte. Bernie's eclectic interests are evidenced in titles of his books: *"California Drawbridges"*, *"Welcome Arches in Small-Town America"*, *"Europe's Fascinating Cable Railways"*, *"European Steam and Mountain Railways"*, *"Little-Known Railways of Austria and Germany"*, *"High Places in Europe"*, *"San Francisco Underfoot"* and *"From the Top of the Hill"*. "My best," Winn had told Nolte, "is the history of California drawbridges." When Bernie couldn't find a publisher, he created Incline Press. He'd explained to Nolte: "They told me, 'Who cares about drawbridges?'" So he published his books himself. "Why?" he was asked. "Why not?" he said.

In 2000, the Winns were guest speakers at the Guild's March membership meeting, attracting a capacity crowd to Doelger Center. He autographed *"From the Top of the Hill"*, donated 10% from book sales to the Guild, and also donated a Student Council wood paddle and other Jefferson Union High School memorabilia. Thanks again, Bernie. R.I.P.



Luncheon: Left, Daly City resident and recently crowned World Champion Irish Dancer Olivia Griffin performed for guests. Above, Marie Brizuela and Marilyn Olcese give certificates to all cookbook recipe donors.

Below, Guests enjoy conversation and red & black table décor.





THE HISTORY GUILD OF DALY CITY/COLMA

DALY CITY HISTORY MUSEUM

6351 Mission Street, Daly City, CA 94014

650/757-7177

Current Hours: Every Tuesday, Thursday, and the first and third Saturdays of the month from noon to 3 p.m.



Please visit us on Facebook/
Daly City History Museum



FIRST CLASS MAIL



Thanks

to the Guild's Spring Luncheon kitchen crew: Mattie Fong, Marcus and Grace Gonzalez, Elinor Charleston, and Marie Brizuella (front). (Marilyn Olcese not pictured)

Below, luncheon guests.



GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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Board meetings are held as necessary and are open to the membership. Please call Mark for further information.

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Contributors: Dana Smith, Mark Weinberger, Rich Rocchetta, Marcus Gonzalez, Russ Brabec, and Bunny Gillespie. Thanks to Judith Christensen, Michael Rocchetta, and Richard Rocchetta for mailing the previous *Tattler*.